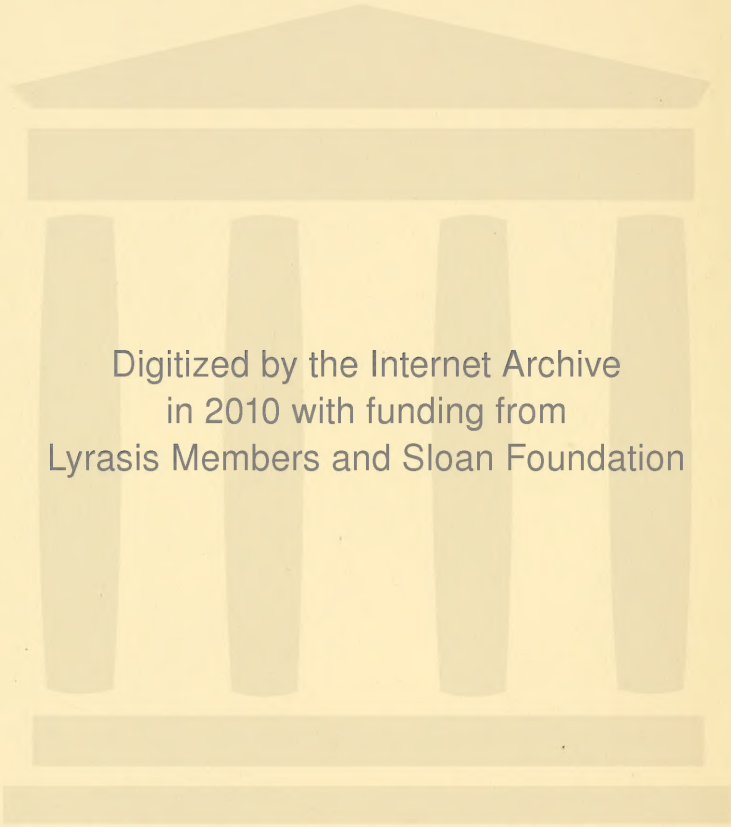
BT645
.D6

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
The Gumberg Library

PROPERTY OF THE
VINCENTIAN SISTERS OF CHARITY
LIBRARY
ST. VINCENT HILL
PERRYSVILLE, PA.

JUL 1947



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Lyrasis Members and Sloan Foundation

http://www.archive.org/details/ourladysfeasts00sist

OUR LADY'S FEASTS

Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Lady's Feasts

Considerations on the feasts of the
Queen of Heaven, for those
who are young—in heart,
or in actuality

BY

SISTER MARY JEAN DORCY, O.P.

Illustrated by the Author

PROPERTY OF THE
VINCENTIAN SISTERS OF CHARITY
LIBRARY
ST. VINCENT HILL
PERRYSVILLE, PA.

1945

SHEED AND WARD · NEW YORK

Copyright, 1945, by Sheed & Ward, Inc.
Manufactured in the United States
Designed by Stefan Salter

NIHIL OBSTAT
Arthur J. Scanlan, S.T.D.
Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR
✠ *Francis J. Spellman, D.D.*
Archbishop, New York

New York, July 6, 1945

BT645
.D6

o 01668931

Contents

	PAGE
The Immaculate Conception	1
The Nativity of Our Lady	11
The Annunciation	19
The Visitation	29
The Nativity of Christ	37
Feast of the Holy Family	47
Our Lady of Sorrows	55
The Assumption	63
Our Lady and the Rosary	71
Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces	79
Devotion to Our Lady	85
Source of Quotations	97
Suggested List of Books for a Marian Library	100

TO YOU WHO LOVE OUR LADY

The Immaculate Conception

"Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary, by the Lord the most High God, above all women upon the earth. Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people. Thou art all fair, O Mary, and there is in thee no stain of original sin."[1]

Immaculate Conception

PERRYSVILLE, PA

When we think of beauty, we think of something having light and color and form of perfect proportions, with no stained or twisted part to mar the whole. It does not matter whether the word *beauty* means to us a mountain, or a flower, or a person, or even a beautiful melody; perfection must be in it, or seem to be in it; else we are not satisfied.

Mary's soul is the most beautiful thing in God's creation. It was shaped and designed as the masterpiece of the One Who planned the sunsets, placed the mountains, bounded the seas, and jewelled the skies. We know from our own eyes' testimony what a matchless artist He is and how all beauty flows from Him as a river of love into this valley of our sorrows. If He has seemingly exhausted Himself in designing the velvet loveliness of a flower petal, or in the glowing tapestry of the sky, it is only to be supposed that in shaping the soul of her who was to be His Mother, He would go so far beyond the imagination of mortals that our words could not begin to describe her perfections. She is "all fair." All the beauty, all the Grace that a creature is capable of possessing, are hers. When we try to imagine Mary's soul, we simply lose ourselves in attempting to find an image of it among earthly beauties.

Saint Paul speaks of the body as the "shrine of the Holy Spirit;"[2] we know that because of the body's great dignity as the abiding place of an immortal soul it should be held in reverence, kept pure and becomingly clothed. How much more is it to be expected that the Blessed Virgin, who was God's earthly temple in a way that no other creature could ever be, would be all-beautiful, and radiant with the utmost in human perfections! From the fabric of human nature no more perfect temple could be erected than she who is so truly "the house of God and the gate of heaven."

You have seen many churches, either in reality or in pictures, and without pretense of knowing much about architecture, you would agree that a church or temple is different from any other sort of building; something within you responds to a church as it does to no other structure. You do not feel like genuflecting when you go into a store, no matter how beautiful it may be, and no building which has a purely business purpose has any power to command your reverence. But almost instinctively as you enter a Catholic church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, you know that here is something which is very great—something which gives meaning to the building, something which directs your thoughts upward. You feel a positive pain of loss when on Good Friday the Blessed Sacrament is removed from the

church and the tabernacle door is left open. This loneliness is something that defies explanation, for the church is just as beautiful as it ever was. But whether you can explain it or not, your Faith tells you that no church, however beautiful, is complete without its Divine Guest. This gives us the position of Catholics with regard to Mary—for Mary is the temple, beautiful and pure, but without Christ she is incomplete. Only as His Mother, His temple, does she hold place in our Faith. Never does she stand alone, for Mary is a creature of God and a child of Adam dependent on the saving merits of Christ.

But as the temple of God, she commands our special reverence and love. The Architect of the universe shaped of her the most beautiful temple ever known. She is a magnificent tabernacle housing an infinite Guest; a perfect setting for a perfect jewel; under these and a thousand other figures people have tried for centuries to describe her. They can only repeat the inspired words of the Scriptures which are applied to her:

> *"Thou art all fair, O Mary,*
> *And there is in thee no stain of original sin."*[3]

Saying this, they had said everything.

Beauty, as a little thought will reveal, is a matter of light, either in the natural order or in the supernatural

order. We cannot see color without light. The soul is not beautiful without the light of God's grace. Original sin was a black cloud of evil, a voluntary "blackout" with which the human race in the person of Adam closed our souls against the light of grace. Today's blackout curtains hide the light within a building when all is dark around it. The first sad mistake of mankind was a real blackout, because it shut out the light and left the soul in darkness. Until the tarry stain of that original blackness is removed from our souls at Baptism, grace cannot shine in to warm it and light it and make it beautiful.

In Mary's soul there was never a shadow of a cloud to shut out the grace of God. The light of His grace streamed in upon her unobstructed, as though her soul were all windows. The radiant colors of all the virtues were found in the clear crystal of her purity. And all this was as it should be, since it would not fit the dignity of the Creator of the universe had His temple ever belonged to anyone else, even for the slightest moment. It was in preparation for her great office as Mother of God that she was preserved at the first moment of her conception from any touch of sin. This, her special privilege, is her Immaculate Conception. Only the Divine Motherhood, for which it was a preparation, is a greater grace.

Among Catholics there never has been any question of the fitness of the Immaculate Conception. In the early ages of the Church the doctrine was taken so much for granted that no one thought it necessary to define it as a dogma which would oblige belief. It was left for the nineteenth century to declare as an article of Faith that Mary was sinless through the anticipated merits of her Son, from the very first moment of her existence. This, one of the latest of her feasts, was announced to the world on the Eighth of December, 1854. Since 1847 Mary in her Immaculate Conception has been the patron of the United States. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is now a holy-day of obligation in the whole Western Church.

In defining the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, it was made clear that (1) Mary, being a child of Adam, was in need of the merits of Christ and that (2) it was because of these merits that she was preserved from the first moment of her existence from the slightest stain of sin. Mary would have been an unsuitable shrine for her Divine Son if ever she had been subject to His enemy, Satan. For the rest of mankind, who are under the cloud of Adam's disobedience, Baptism cleanses the soul and makes it a child of God. But Baptism takes place at some time after a child is born, when he has already lived for some time under the penalty of

sin. This would not do for Mary. *Every moment* of her existence had to be outside the reach of sin. Nothing but absolute freedom from sin would render her worthy —as far as a creature can be worthy—of being the Mother of God. And God, Who does all things well, bestowed upon her the privilege of the Immaculate Conception—"Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

Mary is the only child of Adam who never for an instant bowed to the reign of Satan. What hatred he has for her and how undying is the feud between them, many outward events in history have shown and every saint in heaven bears testimony. Since the day when God comforted His disobedient children in the garden of Eden with the promise of a woman who would "crush the head" of the evil serpent, there has not been an hour's truce between them. "As an army in battle array" she has fearlessly fought him and won from his grasp soul after soul. She knows that we are bought with a great price—the death of her Son—and she does not intend to let any soul perish who will call upon her for help. In Mary, then, we have not only the perfect example of creature holiness, but also a mighty champion who will defend us against all the wiles of the evil one and guide us to her Son.

> *"O holy Mother of God, who didst worthily deserve to conceive Him Whom the whole*

world cannot contain, cleanse away our sins by thy loving intercession, that we who have been redeemed, may through thee be able to ascend to the seat of perpetual glory, where with Him, thy Son, thou reignest forever."[4]

The Nativity of our Lady

"Happy thou, O sacred Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise, for out of thee arose the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord."[5]

Nativity of Our Lady

Dawn has always been a symbol of hope. Most of us do not like the darkness, even though we know of nothing definite to fear in it. When it is dark enough, yes: you can see the stars, and darkness hides much of the man-made ugliness of city streets. The darkness of unconsciousness brings merciful oblivion to one who is having an operation. But our minds were made to seek out and to understand, and they can never be satisfied with the darkness. One need not be a little child, terrified of the unknown, to appreciate that light is more pleasant than darkness.

When in the beginning "light was made" and God divided the night from the day, He might have left it at that, a simple change from dark to light. But God is all beauty and color is His creature. Out of the reach of man (who, if he could lay hands on it, would probably try to change it) God placed between the night and the day the radiant curtain of the dawn. For all time it was to shine there as a promise, heralding the day. God has tried in so many ways to make His children happy!

The world had been a long time in spiritual darkness, shuddering under the frown of its Creator's anger, when dawn lighted its undeserving skies with the first lovely streaks of light. This long advent of four thou-

sand years is remembered yearly in the prayers of the Church for Advent, often under the symbol of light dispelling the darkness:

> *"The night is past and the day is at hand;*
> *Let us therefore cast off the works of*
> *darkness, and put on the armor of light . . ."*[6]
>
> *"O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk*
> *in the light of the Lord our God . . ."*[7]

The world's Redeemer was its light and salvation. So it is that the hope, the promise, and the loveliness of dawn should be early associated with Our Lady, who gave to the world its Lord of Light.

"Morning Star," we call her in the litany; in the Canticle of Canticles she is prefigured by the words,

> *"Who is she that cometh forth as the morning*
> *rising?"*[8]

To us looking back, as to those patriarchs looking ahead for the long four thousand years, "Mary is the dawning, Christ the perfect day." Dark as the world may seem today, it can never be quite dark again since Mary came on earth. For Mary, whose birth was the dawning hope for mankind, brought to us the Light of the world.

Few people were aware that anything unusual had happened the day that Mary came to earth. Kings and

princes did not care that a little daughter had been born to Joachim and Anna. A few relatives came to congratulate the parents; friends brought gifts and asked, of course, what the baby's name was going to be. Miriam? Well, that was nothing strange; there were many Hebrew girls called Miriam. To those who think that public opinion is so vital to success and that nothing will prosper without advertising, the obscurity of Mary's birth is a direct challenge. It is like the noiseless dawn that rises daily whether man looks or not. There are people who are sure that the world will not go around without their management, people who never have time to look at the dawn or to remember that God does things quietly and with certainty. Perhaps they are related to the neighbors who said one to another, on a day long ago, "Joachim and Anna have a child—a daughter, unfortunately—they call her Miriam," and then forgot all about it.

God wanted it to be so, that Mary would grow up lovely and unnoticed among her relatives and neighbors. The less they knew of her, the less they would distract her from her great work in life. There is an ancient tradition that Mary was presented in the temple at the age of three, and that she lived there among the virgins dedicated to work in the temple until she was of marriageable age. Since she must have been the most beau-

tiful of all women, the loveliest in all ways—being without sin—it is hard to imagine that nobody noticed how beautiful she was. We may take it for granted that they did. But Mary was God's, wholly and entirely. During her entire lifetime she took not a single step to be noticed by anyone.

Today if a child is unusually pretty or talented, someone is sure to say, "Let us send her to Hollywood!" There, seeking fame, she will be photographed and publicized: her face will appear in a thousand cheap places; her beauty will become the property of all. And after a few years no one will remember her, because someone else has taken her place. No one ever has or ever will succeed in eclipsing the beauty of Mary, who lived in obscurity nearly two thousand years ago. The beauty of her sinless soul, something so tremendous that words cannot describe it or brush depict it, has been the theme of more masterpieces than all other subjects put together. Not a Christian home in twenty centuries that has not had her picture in it, not an artist who did not try with all his art to carve or paint her image. Churches all over the world today, even though they may be in ruins, still testify to the love mankind has poured at her feet for all these sad years. She has been enshrined in marble, in stone, in glass, in wood and jewels, in song and story, on canvas, in masterpieces so lovely that all

ages will revere them. Countless artists have laid aside their tools with regret on finishing her image, breathing an apology that they had portrayed her so poorly:

> *"For artist's brush can never trace*
> *The beauty, Mother, of thy face;*
> *And if on earth 'tis fair to see,*
> *O what must it in heaven be?"*[9]

We do not know how Our Lady looked on earth (please God we shall some day see in heaven), and artists who have pictured her make her in their highest ideal of beauty, whatever that may be. To the Chinese she is a gentle, slant-eyed oriental lady; to the Indian, the fairest Indian maiden that ever lived; to Italian, Spanish, Flemish artists, she was the loveliest lady of their national type. All this is as it should be, for whereas she was in fact Jewish by race, she is the Mother of all the world's children of every race and color. She is Mother to the Russian peasant who guards her ikon under pain of death, to the German woodcarver who makes her image in wood, to the army chaplain, to the busy mother of a family, to the six-year-old bringing his first holy-card picture of her home from school. She was the same sweet mother to the artist of the Sistine Madonna in the sixteenth century, to those who carved her image in the stones of great cathedrals in the thirteenth, to the cru-

sader who carried her blue banners before Acre in the twelfth, to the Christians who painted her symbols on the walls of the catacombs in the early centuries of the Church. She is not only placeless but also timeless in her love for all of us.

Only think, child of Mary, how wealthy you are, no matter how poor the world may think you! When a child has lost his mother we are very sad, for it seems as if he has nothing more to lose. But God foresaw that on a day long ago, when in the tiny daughter of Joachim and Anna, He saw the beauty of His handiwork and willed to share it with us. Never, since Our Lady came on earth, will any of us be without a mother. Not only shall we benefit by the Light that is Christ, but also, little as we deserve it, we shall share in the beauty of the dawn of salvation, Mary, His Mother.

> "*I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. . . . In me is all hope of life and of virtue. . . . My memory is unto everlasting generations.*"[10]

The Annunciation

"... The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And when the angel had come in to her, he said, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women ...'" [11]

The Annunciation

rtists have for nearly twenty centuries delighted in picturing the scene of the Annunciation. In a thousand ways the picture has been presented to us, with all manner of costume, colors, and materials. One thing they all have in common: the sweetness and humility of the Blessed Virgin and the radiant springtime of the background. For this was the day for which heaven and earth had waited so long; this was the coming of spiritual spring to the earth in its bleak winter of sin.

Where was Mary when the angel came to her? We do not know. She was in prayer, for Mary never was separated from God in her thoughts and affections, which means she was always at prayer. She might have been spinning, or weaving, or reading the Scriptures: the Gospel does not tell us. She was espoused to Saint Joseph, which at that time meant a formal engagement almost as binding as the marriage contract itself. Like all faithful members of the chosen people, she had prayed long and earnestly that the Redeemer would soon be born. In her humility it had never occurred to her that she might be His Mother. She had indeed pronounced a vow of

virginity which would make motherhood impossible for her. But God had plans for her, plans which were announced to her for the first time on that great day of the Annunciation; and Mary, who was in perfect accord with God's plans, agreed to His Will—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

Mary's office as Mother of God was fixed from all eternity. For this was her soul made beautiful; for this was she formed in spotless loveliness in the mind of God "from eternity, and of old before the earth was made."

> "... *When with a certain law and compass, He enclosed the depths; when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters; when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits; when He balanced the foundations of the earth ...*"[12]

she was already in His plan of creation. But even though this was so, Mary's will was free. All heaven hung listening in breathless silence for her answer to the angel's tremendous message. Mary still could have refused to accept the motherhood of the Redeemer; it was an office beset with many sorrows, as she well knew from the Scriptures. One would not, however, expect anything but perfect conformity from one so wholly devoted to

the Will of God. Accordingly, she answered, in nearly the same words her Divine Son was to use on so many occasions—"Thy Will be done"—"Be it done unto me according to Thy word."[13]

With the word of a humble little maiden in an unknown corner of the world, the most tremendous occurrence of all time took place, and God became man. Not in His sublime majesty, from which man would hide his face in terror, but in the humble way that all children of Adam are brought into being, by means of an earthly mother, who was to give Him His human needs of flesh and blood. Because her Son was to be the very Son of God, there would be no need of an earthly father, and His conception took place in a miraculous manner which in no way interfered with His Mother's virginity. This suspension of God's law was no more difficult for God to effect than was the original law itself, for one who makes a law is always empowered to change it.

From the moment of the Incarnation, not only did God become man, but Mary's office towards mankind became fixed forever. The Incarnation was the completion of the beautiful temple that was Mary's soul; the Real Presence rested now in the tabernacle of her flesh. The Incarnation placed upon her soul a mark that will glow forever with a beauty that all eternity will not dim. For in her answer to the angel's message, Mary ful-

filled the purpose of her creation. All that God had planned for her she accepted and embraced with her whole will.

This has a parallel in our own lives when we consider the sacrament of Baptism It, too, places upon our souls a mark that forever will identify it as one privileged of God. Sometimes we forget, in these days when machines are becoming so important, that the soul of the tiniest, poorest babe in the most forgotten spot on earth is worth more than the finest machine ever built, because the soul is the direct handiwork of God and the object of His redemptive suffering. In making a machine, an inventor has in mind some definite use for it; we cannot suppose less care on the part of God. In creating each of the millions of souls that since time began have flowed from His life-giving hands, God has some definite plan in view. More,

> *"He fixes on each wayside stone*
> *A mark to shew it as His own."*
> (Theodore Maynard, "The World's Miser")

Likewise upon each baptized soul He places "a mark to shew it as His own." The sign of Baptism is more than simply a mark of ownership (as though it were not enough to be marked, "This belongs to God. Handle with care!") It is first of all a pledge of sonship, and it

fixes our place in the universe, as Mary's was fixed by the Incarnation.

Earthly fathers plan for their children. A father looking down at his tiny son sees, not a little new-born babe but a grown man—a doctor, an artist, an engineer, a priest, or whatever to him seems finest in life. Nothing on earth is too good for his son. No sacrifice shall be spared that the child will have all that his father can give him. When the child is older, he must work and study to learn his profession, but if he fails it will not be because his father did not help him. Whatever the father owns, his son will inherit some day.

No earthly father or mother ever laid such plans as God makes for each one of us. Looking at you, as you lay newly baptized in your mother's arms, He might have said: "This, my child, should be a saint. I will give him all that he needs to be one. Some day, if he keeps My laws, he will inherit My kingdom and share its great riches with all the saints of all times. When he is older, he will have to work and study and practice virtue, so that he will be a saint. But I will do all that is necessary for him. Not even I can do more than to give him the merits of My Son's passion and death."

Spotless in your robe of baptismal innocence, you might have knocked then at heaven's gate and been admitted without question, for everyone could see that

you were a child of God. But man is a poor caretaker of this great creation, the soul, and it does not take him long to so deface it that no one could recognize it as the image of God. Were we thrust weaponless into this life, it is easy to see how few would succeed, but God is not so careless a Father as to leave us helpless. For Baptism gives to us, as many people do not even trouble to remember, graces that can be called upon when we need them and vows that state unmistakably what we must do to gain heaven. Were we to live faithfully in accordance with our baptismal vows, that shining mark of sonship which marks our souls as belonging to God need never be dimmed by the mists of the world. We need often to remember Mary's compliance with God's Will better to comply ourselves.

It is true, there is but one Mother of God, and her soul stands alone in both its perfections and its sorrows. But the Annunciation was not just an incident happening a long, long time ago, to one person and in one place. In matter of fact, it was that. But it is more, in that it stands as a reminder to all ages that God marks as His own each individual soul. Each has its own work in this world, distinct from that of anyone else. One individual place in heaven is planned for it, and through the merits of Christ all that it needs to reach heaven is placed within its grasp.

Child of God, do you realize the riches to which you will be heir some day if you prove yourself a worthy son of an all-good Creator? Do you understand that God, in His unmeasured ocean of happiness, has cared enough to plan individually for YOU? Perhaps no one else on earth has time to be bothered with you. Well, that is the way with the world; it had no time even for its Savior. But do not ever think that "Nobody cares what happens to ME," because it is simply not true. God cares. He has proved it by sending His Son to die for you, that with His blood He might mark your soul as His property and might give you an everlasting share in the happiness that is His.

> *"O holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, Mother and daughter of the King of kings! Bestow upon us thy consolation, that through thee we may deserve the reward of the heavenly kingdom, and reign with the elect of God unto all eternity."*[14]

The Visitation

"And how have I deserved to be thus visited by the mother of my Lord?"[15]

The Visitation

ur Lady's soul was so united to God that never in all her life was she separated from Him. She was in constant prayer. In remembering this, however, we must not suppose that she simply sat quietly in a corner praying all the time. Pray she certainly did, but her work was an overflowing of her prayer and proceeded directly from it.

In the first place Mary had her ordinary work to do, work that women have never liked very much—washing, cooking, carrying water, spinning, weaving, sewing. No one but a princess could afford to hire others to do her work, and Our Lady, although she was Queen of heaven, lived on earth in very moderate circumstances. At the temple she had definite work to do, and as the wife of Joseph the carpenter she would have little time to be idle. It could have been arranged otherwise, of course, had God so wished. But perhaps because of all the tired homemakers who would one day look to Mary as their model, her work was of the same unexciting type that woman's work has always been. In doing it faithfully, day after day, she gave us the perfect example of the use of circumstances as a help to sanctity. She made untrue for all time the lazy little argument that

"I can't be a saint. Nothing important ever happens to me!"

The difference between Mary's tasks and ours lies in the way they were performed: something-done-for-love, or something-done-because-I-can't-get-out-of-it. Mary's works grew out of her love, of which she had a fullness. Almost all that the Gospel has to say about her reveals her love of God in action, in her consideration for others. At Cana she was to intercede for an embarrassed young couple and save their wedding feast from collapse by a miracle performed at her request. Saint Luke records what is an even more striking incident of her loving works in the Visitation.

The angel was hardly gone from the little house at Nazareth when she went "with haste" to see her cousin Elizabeth. Her reason for going was pure charity. She knew the great miracle that was accomplished in her: that she was the Mother of God. She had studied the Scriptures well and knew the prophecies relating to the Messiah. "He who is mighty, he whose name is holy, has wrought for me his wonders,"[16] she was to tell Elizabeth. She knew that this was a great distinction. If her friends and relatives had known of the angel's message, they would have honored and praised and envied her for being so chosen. Every Jewish girl for thousands of years had hoped to be the one so distinguished. As Mother of

God, Mary was entitled to greater honor than any other woman on earth, "Behold, from this day forward all generations will count me blessed . . ."[17] She should not be expected to make the long hard trip across the hill country of Judea; one does not expect persons of great rank to go out of their way for someone of lesser rank. But Mary knew that her visit would bring joy to Elizabeth. Her own heart was all but breaking with the joy of the angel's message. She simply had to share it. Down through the centuries yet to be, zealous missionaries whose hearts were overfull of love for her Son would hasten to far shores to spill into waiting hearts the joy of the Redemption. The feast of the Visitation was to be especially for them, the feast of the sharing of joy.

The human heart can only hold just so much of joy or sorrow, and after it is full the contents spill over into the lives of those around it. We are not made stony and selfish creatures, sufficient unto ourselves and completely lacking in responsibility to our fellow beings. We are sharers in the sorrows of this life, "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears." If we are faithful we shall also be sharers in the happiness of the life to come. Our Lord was very clear in His statements regarding love for the neighbor; it was to come first after our love of God, on a level with our love for ourselves.

Vincentian High School Library
[illegible] McKnight Road
Pittsburgh 37, Pa.

Mary shows in the Visitation that she placed her love in that relationship. She was the first of countless thousands whose eager feet could hardly wait to carry the joyful tidings of the Redemption to someone who awaited His coming. She was the first Christopher, the first Christ-bearer, the first to share from a full heart the joy that is Christ. Following her hastening feet on that errand of charity, missionaries to the end of time will bear the Light of the world to nations that sit "in darkness and the shadow of death." She was the first missionary, so pure and so loving and so beautiful that youth will always be inspired to follow in her footsteps.

We too are Christ-bearers in a dark world. As members of His Mystical Body, we have somewhat the relationship to the Light of the world that electric wires have to the central power-plant: we do not make the light; we carry it into dark places. As frequent communicants we have the obligation of bringing Him into the lives of those around us.

"You are the light of the world,"[18] He told His apostles. The sentence is addressed to us too. Our paths may not lie to the Orient nor into the heart of the Congo, where peoples have never heard of Christ. We know, with a little reflection, that there are many among our daily associates who would profit by contact with Him. Perhaps we shall be asked on Judgment Day why we

did not bring Him into their lives. We cannot rest content with what we have, a Faith to which perhaps we were born and which we have come to take for granted. Faith must be lived or lost: Christ must be shared if we would have Him ourselves. Our Communions are not finished when we have said our thanksgiving prayers. As we go from the church to our daily tasks, Christ must go with us as He went with Mary, so that people will know (as Elizabeth knew, without being told) that Christ is there. Preaching at people can never be the answer to our obligation of sharing Christ: we must manifest Him in deeds as Mary did.

It is true that if we do not possess anything, we have nothing to share. To enkindle others with love of God, we must ourselves be aflame. To share with others the joy of Christ, we must possess Him ourselves. Only when He reigns in our souls can we hope to give to this joyless world any reflection of the happiness that is His, and to follow in Mary's office of the bringing of joy.

Cause of our joy, pray for us!

The Nativity of Christ

"While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thine almighty word, O Lord, came down from heaven, from Thy royal throne . . ."[19]

Nativity of Christ

The long-awaited of nations, the promised One, the Redeemer for Whose coming the faithful had prayed through thousands of weary years, came at last to earth in the little village of Bethlehem when during a brief period this warring world was at peace. The peace was an uneasy one, under the iron grip of Caesar Augustus. In obedience to that ruler, Joseph had left his little home at Nazareth to journey to the city of David, to be enrolled in the census with Mary his espoused wife. Such a trip in midwinter was a definite hardship for them, as the laws of tyrants are often uncomfortable and unreasonable. However, Mary and Joseph were accustomed to obedience and, complying with the haughty order of an earthly ruler, they fulfilled the prophecy of a greater One, that the Redeemer should be born in Bethlehem. Later, Christ was to die under the sentence of an earthly judge who but carried out an eternal decree. Speculatively, it is easy to remember these things, but at Bethlehem, in the piercing cold with every door closed against them, it took both Faith and humility to see God's hand in the arrogance of creatures.

In the words of the Nicene Creed, Jesus is:

> "... *The only-begotten Son of God and born of the Father before all ages. God of God, light of light, true God of true God. Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father: by Whom all things were made ...*"

Yet when He came down from heaven to be born on earth, He did not disdain to be obedient to His creatures Mary and Joseph. They in their turn were obedient to their earthly superiors, not because of inferiority but to show us, proud creatures that we are, that those nearest to God are the most humble.

It seems strange to us that the Hebrew people, who had waited and prayed so long for His coming, would not have welcomed Him when He came. Why did they allow Him to be born in a stable? Humility has never been given a kingly reception by the proud ones of earth, and the humble are seldom glamorous. The Hebrews expected a king who would arrive in glory to restore their nation to its former power, a great temporal ruler who would crush their enemies and make them the rulers of the earth. A king in the disguise of a tiny babe, who came "in quiet silence," was hardly the sort of Messiah they were expecting. So, when He came,

> "... *He, through whom the world was made, was in the world, and the world did not recognize him.*"[20]

Only those who were not "of the world" and its spirit of greed and selfishness could recognize in Mary's little Son the Redeemer, the Light of the world.

But Mary knew. The angel had said to her at the Annunciation that He would be the Son of God, a King Who would reign forever. Her heart must have bled for the welcome He was receiving from the world He had made. The throne which the world had prepared for its King was a chilly cave on a hillside where the animals warmed Him with their breath. His welcomers were only frightened shepherds, kneeling in awe to worship Him Whose birth was sung by angels. Kings and rulers who should have been there offering their homage were far away and much too busy to care about this poor young couple who had had to take shelter in a cave because there was "no room in the inn." And Mary, in spite of the breath-taking joy of holding in her arms the desired One of nations, must have wept bitterly because the earth He had made would grant Him no more than this. No more? Yes, they would one day offer Him another throne on the crest of Calvary; a crown of thorns for His lovely head; nails that were bigger by far than the tiny hands they would one day pinion to the wood of the cross. Mary knew what earth had prepared for its Redeemer.

It is true that God had shaped for Himself the most

perfect throne in all the world, the spotless sanctuary of Mary's breast. Around Him as He lay, a trembling babe in her arms, there showered down the most perfect adoration that a creature heart could frame. If God had made no other soul than Mary's, still His boundless power, His love and mercy and goodness, would have received from her alone a satisfactory return on the investment in human nature. But in matter of fact Mary was not God's only creature. He made the angels, and the angels had their trial from which some fell, never to rise again. He created man "a little less than the angels," and man failed Him too. Now, face to face with the Redeemer Whom He in His Mercy had sent to them, what would they do and how would they welcome Him?

> "*. . . He came to what was his own, and they who were his own gave him no welcome.*"[21]

Not the cold winds that swept the Judean hills that night could trouble Him, for He had made the winds and they obeyed Him in blowing cold. The coldness that should not have met Him was the chilling indifference in the hearts of men, for the heart of man was shaped for love. Probably He was not much troubled at the innkeepers who closed their doors against Him that night, for after all they were poor and ignorant, rushed

with the crowds coming into Bethlehem and probably guilty of very little sin. How should they know that this poor young woman was to be the Mother of the Messiah? She did not tell them so. But we, who know Who He is, cannot escape the responsibility. It is we who receive Him not.

Strangely and sadly, He comes but to bring us joy, of which we all have need:

> "*Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad before the face of the Lord, because He cometh.*"[22]

And we will have none of it. Deliberately we close our doors against the only Joy; willfully we refuse what Christ made the long journey from heaven to earth to bring us.

Nothing in all the world's literature is so full of joy as the prayers of the Church for Advent and for Christmas. Every nation has its heritage of beauty in art, poetry, and music: no matter what foreign tyrant takes over the government, the people will cling to this last greatest wealth of literature. But the liturgy of the Church is a vast storehouse of wealth from which all may draw who possess one Faith. National differences disappear as all the earth cries out, today as two thousand years ago:

"To Thee have I lifted up my soul;
in Thee, O God, I put my trust . . .
Show, O Lord, Thy ways to me
and teach me Thy paths . . ."[23]

as also in the last jubilant promise in the Mass for the Vigil of the Nativity:

"In the morning you shall see His glory."[24]

There is a joy in the Advent prayers that nothing on earth can equal, because they are so perfectly in accord with the spirit of those who did receive the Redeemer. They might be the very words of Mary, or Joseph, or the shepherds. Following these prayers yearly, as the Church urges us to do, makes us one in spirit with the humble ones who saw Him and understood. It makes the Incarnation a living thing, not an incident of the long ago but a tremendously important part of our lives which recurs again and again.

You and I were not at Bethlehem when His Mother wandered through the streets looking for a place where the Redeemer of the world could be born. We are present when He is born again each day in the Mass, and yet each day we find room for almost everybody but Christ. He comes to us in Holy Communion to bring us joy and strength and holiness and peace; and often we have no room. His Mother would teach us to be humble and

obedient, and we have no room for her either. Perhaps we are too busy to answer her knock, or we have the uneasy feeling that it must be uncomfortable to be holy —and if there is anything this generation asks of life, it is to be comfortable.

Two thousand years are nothing in the eyes of God, Who is eternal. Today we are as certainly given the opportunity of receiving or rejecting Him as were the people of Bethlehem on a starry night long ago when

> *"The Word was made flesh,*
> *and came to dwell among us;"*[25]

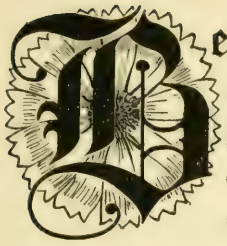
We cannot, with the shepherds, "go over to Bethlehem to see," but our Faith tells us where we can find Him and why He has taken upon Himself the poor clothing of our nature. We cannot plead ignorance like the innkeepers of Bethlehem; we have had too many opportunities and good examples to remain in ignorance of Who He is. How much more the pity, then, if we deliberately reject the joy He comes to bring us and, in our pride, "receive Him not"!

> *"A light shall shine upon us this day,*
> *for our Lord is born to us:*
> *and He shall be called Wonderful, God,*
> *the Prince of peace,*
> *the Father of the world to come,*
> *of Whose reign there shall be no end."*[26]

Feast of the Holy Family

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee forever and ever."[27]

Feast of the Holy Family



elonging to the hidden years at Nazareth, this feast reminds us that God has in view always our needs and our trials. Christ came on earth to save us. His was the tremendous task of converting a hard-hearted world to a way of life that would upset all man's notions of self-indulgent living. Yet, with this great work to be fulfilled, he spent but three years in public life. The remaining thirty years were passed in a town so small and so thoroughly unimportant that people were to say to Him, doubtingly, "Can any thing good come out of Nazareth?"

Probably this was in the decrees of God because so many of us live what the world considers very unimportant lives. Armies do not march at our command; people do not go halfway around the world to see us; history will have nothing to say of us. No one, in fact, pays very much attention to us. If we take for ourselves no other models than those who are world-famous or even notorious, this will hurt us a great deal and result in a lifetime of striving to "be somebody." But if we follow the model of a Redeemer who for thirty years lived in obscurity, it should not distress us to be ignored. There are very few people of worldly importance; far in the majority are the multitudes of ordinary people whose

path to heaven is unexciting and unromantic. How very kind of God to show us by His long hidden life that His plan of redemption includes everyone, even those whose lives are so unremarkable that the world does not notice at all!

To Mary the hidden life brought its peculiar joys and sorrows: the joy of being always with Jesus, the sorrow of knowing that this beautiful Child must grow to be the Man of Sorrows. Mary and Joseph were privileged above all the earth's peoples in being able to live under the same roof with God Incarnate. They shielded Him on the frightening flight into Egypt, guarded Him during the exile. They heard His first word, guided His first step, and watched Him grow out of babyhood into boyhood and young manhood. With God dwelling in it, the little house at Nazareth was as near to heaven as anything on earth could be. However humble their work, it was sweetened by the joy of doing it for Jesus.

And it goes without saying that their household tasks were tiresome, as such tasks have always been. Saint Joseph worked hard as a carpenter, receiving probably just enough wages to keep his little family supplied with necessities. Our Lady had nothing of convenience in her tiny home. A home where Jesus was did not need to have anything but Himself to make it heaven on earth. The house at Nazareth was to be the model for

all the ages to come, when the unending tasks of millions of hard-working mothers and fathers would be dignified by being patterned after those of the Holy Family. It could not be the material model for the electrically run homes of today, but it is a lasting proof that material conveniences do not make a home. Only the people within it can do that.

Mary and Joseph watched their holy Charge lovingly. They understood, when He was obedient to them, that He was showing them, and through them the whole world, the real meaning of humility. Later He was to say to the apostles:

> "... *learn from me; I am gentle and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.*"[28]

He began to teach there, in the obscurity of Nazareth.

Only the humble need apply for the heavenly help of the Holy Family. The proud, and those who are concerned with social position, would be uncomfortable in the poor home of a village carpenter. But the poor in spirit, whom Our Lord was to call "blessed" in His sermon on the mount, are never embarrassed to be found suppliant at the feet of the Holy Family.

Christ preached many times against wealth, because it so often blinds men's hearts to the important things of God. The Scriptures are filled with references to

God's care of His creatures and the futility of our worrying about worldly goods. In Psalm 39 is sweetly stated:

"The Lord is careful for me."

The idea is even more developed when in the 90th Psalm, said during Compline (the night-prayer of the Church), is sung:

> *"O Thou that dwellest beneath the shelter of the Most High, and abidest under the shadow of the Almighty.... With His pinions shall He shelter thee, and under His wings shalt thou be secure..."*

Loving confidence in God is the keynote of these and many other psalm verses: they breathe the spirit of the Holy Family. Mary and Joseph were filled with confidence in God's mercy, and they sought nothing outside their humble little home, which was the sanctuary of the Most High.

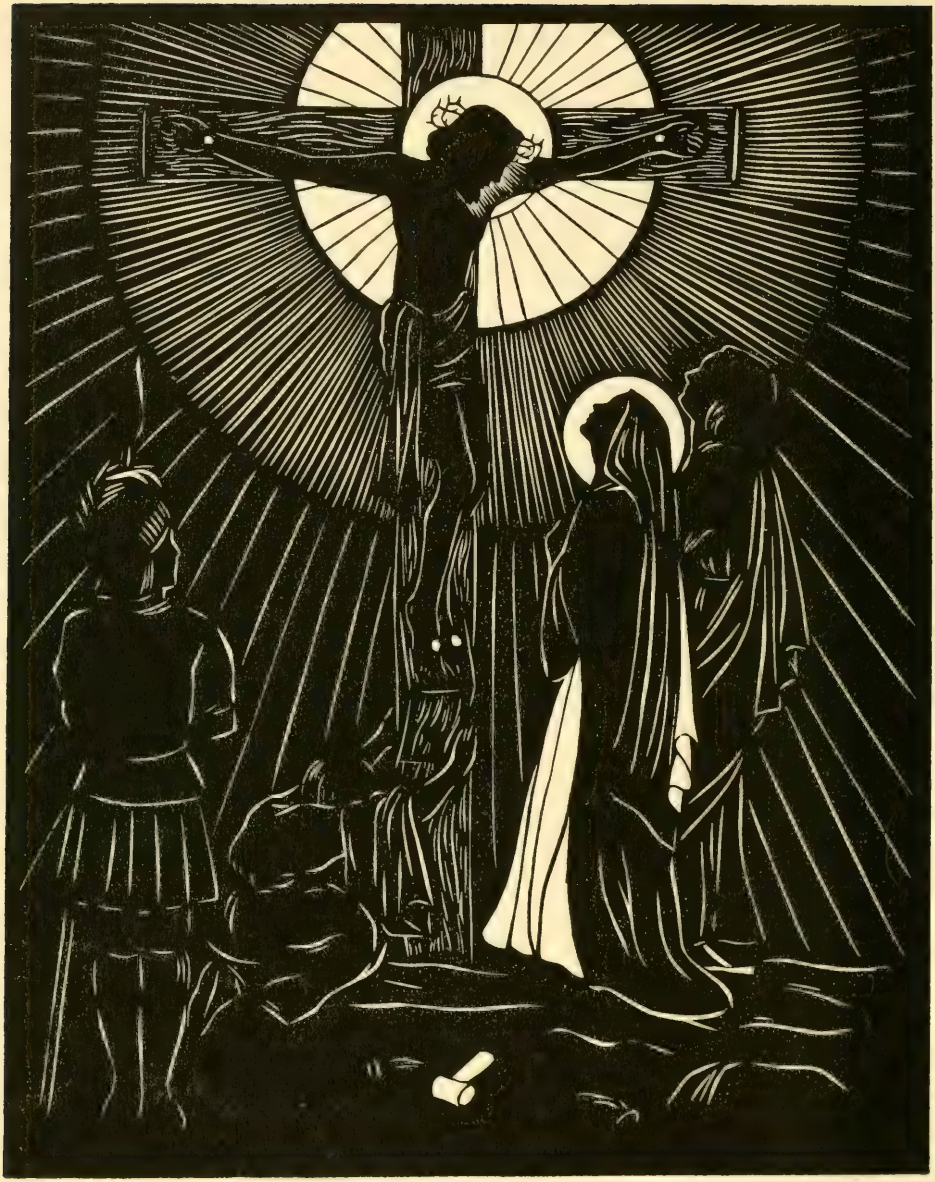
Christian homes today are few, partly because of man's—and woman's—mad pursuit of wealth and position. The little home at Nazareth, in which the gracious Queen of heaven dwelt humbly as the village carpenter's wife, could teach many lessons to parents of today and tomorrow. The virtues of humility and poverty of

spirit, and the great and beautiful virtue of charity, are just as hard to practice today as they have always been. But this same gracious Lady—who is also our Mother—has a personal interest in helping each one of us to practice them. If only we would remember to ask her!

> *"O God, the protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing holy: increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy, that Thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things which are eternal . . ."*[29]

Our Lady of Sorrows

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see, if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow."[30]



Compassion of Our Lady

In accepting the angel's message at the Annunciation, Mary knew that her path was marked for suffering. She did not need to wait for holy Simeon to tell her at the Presentation that a sword would pierce her heart. All devout Jews knew the prophecies relating to the Messiah. Without knowing exactly how God's Will would be worked out in the Redeemer's sufferings, Mary was nevertheless well aware that He must suffer and die to save His people. By the bond of nature which makes any mother suffer with every sorrow of her children's lives, Mary would be bound to suffer when she saw her Son die upon the cross. But more than the great love of earthly mothers did she bear to this perfect Son; for He had Himself made her more capable of love than others, since, unspotted by sin, she could understand more clearly the beauty of God. This meant that Mary must suffer, more than had any other woman on earth.

Christ the Redeemer had to die, to be "lifted up," that the whole world might be drawn to Him. Why God arranged it that His Mother should suffer too is something we do not understand, but in His infinite wisdom He saw it as an essential part of the scheme of redemption. It is certain that whatever its first purpose,

Mary's presence on Calvary gave to all of us a much-needed lesson of love and courage.

"Love" is a word that is much battered about in an age of materialism. Looking at Mary, we know that love is not the selfish and grasping thing that the world would have us believe: love does not take, it gives. And to give means sacrifice—a word we do not like, because it means to give up something we want for ourselves. To be able to give it up at all, we must love someone else better than ourselves. Our very Christian way of life commands us to love God "above all things," but few of us are brave enough to take the command literally. Some are, and we call them saints. Some people on the other extreme build about their hearts a shell of selfishness, not leaving room for the God Who made them. They are almost incapable of love. But because of Mary, because of her Divine Son Who sacrificed even His life for us, the world still has also many generous souls. They have learned that nothing is valuable unless it costs a great deal—not in money, but in tears, or in pain, or in silent disappointment. Sacrifice is not a word to make them afraid, because they remember that day of supreme sacrifice. They are brave enough to say—and mean:

"Holy Mother, this impart,
Deeply print upon my heart
All the wounds my Saviour bore.

Let me share His pains with thee,
Who so tenderly for me
Deigned His sacred blood to pour."[31]

There was enough to frighten any woman on Calvary that first Good Friday afternoon. Terrified apostles had fled, all but John. No one knew what the mob's next move might be. Rough soldiers, shouting and cursing, pushed back the crowds that pressed hooting about the top of the hill, shouting:

" . . . come down from that cross,
if thou art the Son of God."[32]

When Jesus gave up His spirit, the earth rocked in a frightful quake. Graves opened, the dead walked in the eerie noonday darkness. The mob that had demanded His death milled about the mount where He hung between earth and heaven. At that moment, when even strong men fled in terror, Calvary was no place for a gentle woman. But Mary, her heart fixed on her only One, stood steadfast by the cross of her Son, regardless of what the mob might do. As His Mother, that was her place, and there she remained, with no thought of per-

sonal danger such as might have troubled a less courageous heart.

There is a sweetness to sacrifice that small hearts never know, a sweetness that Mary tasted to its depths on Calvary when she lost herself in Christ. It is a joy to suffer for someone we love. That is a secret that only the courageous ever find out, and it has to be learned the hard way, by experience. For inspiration our eyes turn back to a windy hill on which three crosses are stark against the sky and where there stands a woman unafraid in the terrible darkness because her love is so much greater than all human fear.

"Let thy heart take courage
and be brave for the Lord."[33]

Perhaps more today than at any time in the world's history do women need to be courageous. The age is past when great physical courage is demanded of them as it was of our pioneer ancestors: moral courage was never more needed than now. Sacrifice is a word that has been put on the shelf (until war or disaster brings it once more into use) because people would so much rather be comfortable than brave. But those who shrink from making a sacrifice, for fear it will hurt too much, never taste the joy of that real love which Mary knew.

We have a special claim on the love of Mary because

she is our very own. On that bitter afternoon when the Son of God hung dying on the throne man had built for Him, He made a last will and testament leaving to us His dearest possession—His Mother. "Behold thy Mother" was said to each of us in the person of Saint John, who stood then grieving beneath the cross, where sooner or later each of us must stand.

None of us will ever be called upon to stand, as Mary stood, beneath a cross where a Son dearer than life itself hangs dying. Even martyrdom, and all the pains of all the martyrs of the last nineteen hundred years, cannot measure up to the sorrows of Mary. But to each of us, some day, sorrow will come, and death will take away those we love. In that day we shall need to remember Mary's love, her courage, her Faith. More than that do we need her help to make us courageous in the crosses of every day, so that we may stand unafraid before a jeering world and do what we know to be right, whatever the mob might think.

> *"O holy Mary, most compassionate of all the compassionate, and holiest of all the holy, make intercession for us. Through thee, O Virgin, may He receive our prayers, Who, born for us of thee, reigneth above the skies; that so, by His loving-kindness, our sins may be cleansed away."*[34]

The Assumption

"O glorious Lady, throned in light, Sublime above the starry height!"[35]

The Assumption

Mary's Assumption, body and soul, into heaven has never been defined as an article of Faith; probably because no one ever seriously questioned it. Christian tradition relates that she died in Jerusalem, whence she had returned after several years at the home of Saint John in Ephesus. At the moment of her death, all the apostles except Saint Thomas were miraculously transported to her bedside, where they wept sorrowfully because she was to leave them. According to tradition, her Assumption was made known to them when Thomas arrived after her burial and wished to see her. The tomb was empty of its dear treasure but filled with beautiful lilies. Whatever the correctness of the tradition—and there is no serious reason to doubt it—it is quite fitting that God, Who preserved Mary from the first moment of her existence from any stain of sin, should have spared her body the penalty of corruption, which is part of the debt of sin:

> *"Mary has been taken up into heaven:*
> *therefore do the angels in their choirs rejoice!"*[36]

Mary's longing for her Son and God must have been so intense during those years on earth after His death and Ascension that the very distance between heaven and

earth melted away by the fire of her love. She had Him as we also have, in Holy Communion; but her love was so intense that she lived only for the day when she would be reunited with Him in heaven. For the time being, she was needed on earth to mother the Church He had founded, to console the apostles in their trials, to do the thousand things that only she could do to make life on earth endurable for the first Christians. And whatever her longing for her Son, she did her allotted work, the Will of God, with all her heart. Yet, busy as she was on earth, her heart was with her Son.

We know from the very imperfect figure of human love that the goal of love is union. What we love we want to be near, always. Nearness for a time can never satisfy. "Until death do us part," the words that tell us what we expect of human love, are an expression of permanence. No love that lasts any less than until death can be dignified by the name of love at all. And while that seems to be the ultimate in human love—perhaps it is all one can expect of anything human—Mary's love for her Son demonstrates that even "unto death" is not long enough. Love must last beyond the bounds of space and time, past death and throughout eternity. The love of Christ for us is that way: timeless, spaceless: your Communion this morning in London or Chicago or Bombay brought you into union with Him Who, physi-

cally speaking, died nineteen hundred years ago in Palestine but lives on forever in a love that will not die.

When a religious makes her vows "unto death," she is imitating Mary's life in the years at Jerusalem and Ephesus. Perhaps it was just to provide religious with a perfect model that Mary lived there for those long lonely years after her Son had gone to heaven. At Bethlehem she was the model of the priest, being the first human agency in whose pure hands rested the Maker of heaven and earth. In the Visitation she was the first missionary priest or sister or brother, hurrying to bring Christ to someone who was in darkness. In her long hidden life at Nazareth she was an example to all the world's busy and unsung parents, showing them the dignity of the endless tiresome tasks of homemaking. Now at Ephesus, where she worked for the new Church and helped the apostolate with her prayers, she gave an example to all the courageous men and women who in the coming centuries would be contemplative religious, praying in loving loneliness for heaven.

The Assumption is a feast of pure joy, as the first Assumption day must have been in heaven. All heaven awaited its Queen—Queen of Angels, of Patriarchs, of Prophets, of Apostles (one of that little flock was already there when she came) of Martyrs, of Confessors, of Virgins—of All Saints. It is beyond our limited

imaginations to picture the joy of her heart at being once more united to her Son. The Church has chosen for the Mass of the day the most joyful expressions possible. From the Introit's happy phrases the happiness extends throughout the whole Mass:

> *"Let us all rejoice in the Lord,*
> *celebrating a festal day in honor of the*
> *Blessed Virgin Mary, on whose Assumption the*
> *angels rejoice and give praise to the Son of God."*[37]

In all Christian countries, Assumption Day has been a great feast for so many years that its beginnings are lost in antiquity. Now the feast is a Holyday of Obligation, one of two feasts of Our Lady to be so designated in our country. In a doubting and unhappy world this feast day stands as a perpetual reminder of one who was not bound down to this earth even while she lived upon it. It recalls to us that, busy though we may be with this world, we have here no lasting city. Saint Augustine's words, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless ever until they rest in Thee," were never more truly demonstrated than in the life of Mary, who on Assumption Day entered upon the everlasting contemplation of God as He is in heaven. Mary's love was simply too great for this world to hold, and only heaven could contain it.

"Hail O star of ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
Ever sinless Virgin,
Gate of heaven's rest!

Show thyself a mother,
May the Word Divine,
Born for us thine infant
Hear our prayers through thine.

Keep our life all spotless,
Make our way secure
Till we find in Jesus
Joys that shall endure."[38]

Our Lady and the Rosary

"Blessed Mother and Virgin undefiled, glorious Queen of the world, intercede for us with the Lord."[39]

Our Lady of the Rosary

f all the devotions dear to the Mother of God, the Rosary has a wider distribution and has been approved by more agencies human and divine than any other. It was a devotion advocated by Our Lady herself in at least three separate apparitions, in different lands and in different centuries, some of quite recent occurrence. In 1917 she appeared to three children at Fatima in Portugal, exhorting them to say the Rosary. In 1858 she appeared to little Bernadette at Lourdes, with nearly the same message. Long centuries before this, tradition has it that she appeared to a young Spanish priest, Dominic de Guzman, and first described in detail how her Rosary should be said.

Few records exist on the subject, but tradition appoints somewhere in the south of France, and the opening years of the thirteenth century, as the place and time of this first apparition. The young priest to whom she appeared was a missionary burdened with the task of fighting a heresy that was causing the ruin of thousands of souls and threatening to overwhelm the Church in France and ultimately in all Europe. Meeting with little success in his mission, Dominic threw himself at Our Lady's feet, begging for some special help in this emergency. Mary answered his plea by describing to him the

method of preaching with the Rosary. Whatever the details of its origin, history bears out the fact that the Rosary has been one of the principal factors in the spread of Christianity since that time.

Dominic was not the first to use beads in counting prayers. Centuries before his time, fervent souls had kept account of prayers by using small pebbles or beads, in chaplets of varying prayers and lengths. But tradition ascribes to him the combination of vocal and mental prayers which we now know as the Rosary. A particular scene from Our Lord's life is appointed for meditation with each decade of ten Hail Marys, one Our Father, and one Gloria. The prayers themselves are a repetition of the vocal prayers most familiarly known to Catholics. Its very simplicity makes it a devotion quickly grasped by a child, by a new convert, by a person who cannot read. But the vocal limitations place no bounds on the meditation that accompanies the Mysteries. These, even the most learned will never exhaust.

"O Queen of the holy Rosary, each mystery blends with thine
The sacred life of Jesus in every step divine;
Thy soul was His fair garden, thy virgin breast His throne,
Thy heart His faithful mirror reflecting Him alone."

Our Lady's Rosary was the terrible secret weapon which turned back at least two great armies: the Turkish fleet was vanquished at Lepanto in 1571 by the power of the Rosary, and again in Hungary in 1716 the Mohammedan hordes were turned back by the same weapon. In gratitude for these victories, the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians was appointed to be kept on May 24th. The feast of the Most Holy Rosary is kept either on the first Sunday of October or on October 7th. Also commemorated is the feast of Our Lady of Victory.

It was more than six centuries after Dominic preached the Rosary that Our Lady again appeared, and again in France, in behalf of the Rosary. At Lourdes in the Pyrenees she manifested to a frightened little girl that she was "The Immaculate Conception" and that she wished her Rosary to be said. Since the eighteen successive apparitions there in 1858, an unending stream of pilgrims has poured into Lourdes from all parts of the world, and hundreds of miracles worked at the shrine defy the finest researches of medical science.

In our own century Our Lady came again, this time to Portugal when the world was engrossed in the first World War. To the three children of Fatima she brought the same message—repent for sins and pray the Rosary.

Almost every Catholic has a Rosary and says it more

or less faithfully. How many million miles Rosary beads have traveled through troubled fingers only God and His Mother know. How many miracles of grace it has worked in the lives of those who were faithful to this devotion, it must keep the angels busy to record. How many times it has pulled back from the gates of hell some wayward soul who perhaps has no other devotion, we shall have to wait for heaven to discover.

The vocal prayers of the Rosary are repeated over and over, perhaps because we are all children at heart and children love to ask the same thing over and over of a loving mother. Some have found in this a point to criticize; they have never sounded to its depths this prayer that is so dear to Mary. There are times in all our lives when, faced with pain or sorrow, our very thoughts seem to stop; in such paralyzing moments the only prayers that will come to our lips are those we have said since childhood: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Gloria. It is a natural thing that a stricken child should call upon its mother for help; so it is that we grope for our Rosary in the darkness of tragedy or temptation. And Our Lady does not fail to help: she is a careful mother.

Paradoxically, though the Rosary is limited to so few prayers said vocally, its possibilities for mental prayer have almost no limits at all. The greatest of mystics

and scholars have lost themselves in the depths of the Mysteries presented by these scenes of the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of the Redeemer. The wings for soaring are to be found in any of the Mysteries; in the measure in which we can detach ourselves from earth, poor mortals that we are, we are allowed to fly to God.

Throughout the troubled centuries since Dominic first preached the Rosary, it has been a lifeline to heaven for millions of souls. Through the terrors of persecution in country after country, Christians who dared not convene for prayers, who were denied the Mass because all their priests had been killed, whispered in secret the prayer of the Rosary. In this way the Faith has been preserved, sometimes for centuries. Even today, many a Catholic struck down by accident or sudden illness owes the grace of receiving the Last Sacraments to the fact that he carries a Rosary in his pocket. For that is an unmistakable sign that he is one who has a claim upon the Mother of God; he will have an intercessor to stand beside him at the throne of God. After a lifetime of saying, over and over, "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death," one could expect nothing else but that she would.

"O holy Mary, most compassionate of virgins, receive the earnest prayers of lowly servants: raise the fallen, correct the erring, calm the fearful and give strength to the faint-hearted: that we may always act in praise of thee whom we venerate as Mother of the Most High God."[40]

Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces

"In me is all grace of the way and of the truth."[41]

Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces

The newest feast of Our Lady, that of Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, repeats the traditional Catholic belief that Mary is

> *"The channel of pardon . . . the Mother of Grace . . . the Hope of the world."*[42]

As God's Mother she is the one through whose mediation all blessings come to us.

Mary is a creature, and as such, is separated by infinite distance from the God Who made her. But as His Mother she has become a co-helper in our redemption. Through her free consent at the Annunciation, God took from her the flesh and blood needful for His Incarnation. It is true that God, being all-powerful, could have arranged for the Incarnation to take place in some other way. But as a matter of fact, He did ordain that it be done in this way, and Our Lady, being the channel by which Christ came to us, was made a Mediatrix between God and man.

In regard to our spiritual life, Mary does not act independently of Christ, and she is never honored apart from her office as His Mother. She was herself redeemed by His sacrifice. But Mary cooperated in the Redemp-

tion by her free consent. Without Christ, Mary would be as poor as any other creature, but with Him she is immensely rich in grace.

With such influence over the heart of her Son, Mary's intercessory help is almost more than we can imagine. Only in heaven shall we ever know how many souls she has wrested from the hold of evil. She is the one person whose virtue is unconquerable by the malice of Satan, the one person he hates above all others. Before her he retires in confusion. None of his wiles have any effect against her prayers. In this world where our poor flesh must wrestle with the powers of darkness, it is of inestimable help to know that one stands ever at our side ready to deal our powerful enemy a decisive blow—if we will just remember to ask her.

It would seem, then, that we have no reason ever to fall into sin: unfortunately, however, we do not always remember to call on our powerful protectress. Neither can we expect her help if we persist in loving our habits of sin. But one who takes the ordinary precautions of frequent reception of the Sacraments and obedience to the laws of God, need never fear that Our Lady will neglect him in a moment of need.

> *"Be mindful, O Virgin Mother who dost stand in the sight of God, to speak good things for us and to turn away His anger from us."*[43]

Mothers seem always to have a soft spot in their hearts for naughty children. Everyone else in the world may despair of a wayward child, but its mother never does. To her he is always lovable, even though she cannot justify his acts. Her well-behaved children may even think they are being neglected (remember the parable of the prodigal son?) because the wayward one gets more attention. The mother's argument very likely is that he needs it more. All this should be an encouragement to people who, because of an impetuous nature or for some other circumstance, are always getting into trouble. Naturally this does not mean that people who deliberately court trouble can expect to be always rescued from their own folly at the opportune moment. But Mary, Mother of us all and dispenser of graces, will never stand and let a faithful child be lost. No mother would, were it in her power to save her child.

Mary has seen the terrible cost of sin: no wonder she hates it. She has seen how much her Son suffered for mankind: no wonder she loves us. She was present when the price of man's infidelity was measured in the suffering flesh of her Son. She saw every wound inflicted on His beautiful body, and she watched Him die after frightful agony in order to redeem us. He has bought us with a great price. No wonder she does not want one drop of His Precious Blood to be wasted.

Our Lady was undisputed Queen of the Christian world until, at the time of the Reformation, those whose hearts were blinded by heresy dethroned her in their new sects. How poor such people are, having no mother! Yearning for the souls that have wandered, Mary has relentlessly fought every heresy and wrestled with the powers of darkness to bring back to the Light some straying child. We sing of her:

> *"Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all heresies throughout the world."*[44]

Dispenser of the vast stores of heaven through her Son, Mary stands between our nothingness and the majesty of God. To us she gives the perfect example of a creature not only free from all taint of sin but also full of all grace. And for us, on the other hand, as she stands at the court of heaven, what does she do? She fulfills the office of all good mothers: promising, explaining, pleading for us, as mothers always do.

> *"Ave Maria, O maiden, O mother,*
> *Fondly thy children are calling on thee;*
> *Thine are the graces unclaimed by another,*
> *Sinless and beautiful Star of the Sea!*
>
> MATER AMABILIS, ORA PRO NOBIS!
> *Pray for thy children who call upon thee!*
> AVE SANCTISSIMA, AVE PURISSIMA,
> *Sinless and beautiful Star of the Sea!"*

Devotion to Our Lady

"Intercede for us, O holy Virgin of virgins, Mary, Mother of God!"[45]

Devotion to Mary is not one of the four marks designating Christ's Church, but it is an almost certain indication of Catholicity. One cannot be a true member of the Church without loving her who gave us Christ, in His human form, so that we who are human could follow Him. So it is that from the dawn of Christianity, Mary has been the mother of us all, and we as her children make every effort to remind her that we belong to her.

It would be virtually impossible to list all the feasts of Our Lady throughout the world: there are so many that they would very likely fill up a year's calendar by themselves. Through the centuries people of all lands have vied with one another to do honor to the Mother of God in establishing feasts and pilgrimages. In countless tiny villages are shrines recalling an apparition of Our Lady of perhaps many centuries ago; tradition has grown up locally regarding a treasured visit of the Queen of Heaven to some poor child or peasant workman. Even today in the midst of war, reports are sent in from this part of the world or that, telling of what is thought to have been a visit of Our Lady. We know that she loves us and that through the weary years she has appeared from time to time to encourage her children. But it

takes a long time to have such an apparition authenticated, as the long process of Lourdes has demonstrated in modern times. Many such shrines remain authorized only for local devotion and so are never recorded for universal veneration. Consequently such local or national feasts are listed only in the country in which they are authorized, and only the main feasts of universal observance are commonly seen in the missal.

Two of Our Lady's feasts, the Immaculate Conception (December 8th) and the Assumption (August 15th) are Holydays of Obligations in the United States. Certain religious congregations keep with special solemnity the feasts of Mary which give them their name—that of the Visitation and the Presentation, for example. The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is especially dear to the Carmelites, the feast of the Most Holy Rosary to the Dominicans. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is especially celebrated in Mexico. It would seem that among the great variety of feasts and titles with which the calendar is jewelled, there is one to suit every Catholic, of whatever walk of life.

With regard only to type of feast, and not to its classification as to liturgical rank, the first group of feasts of Our Lady have to do with events in her life. The principal ones of these are:

The Immaculate Conception: December 8
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary: September 8
The Holy Name of Mary: September 12
Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: November 21
The Espousals: January 23
The Annunciation: March 25
The Visitation: July 2
Expectation of Our Lady: December 18
Maternity of Our Lady: October 11
The Purification: February 2
The Flight into Egypt: February 17
Feast of the Holy Family: Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany
Our Lady of Sorrows: September 15
Feast of the Seven Dolours: Friday in Passion Week
The Assumption: August 15

Time after time has Our Lady, good Mother that she is, appeared on earth to encourage her children, or to give some favored one a task to perform or a message to carry to the world. Some of these visits were very long ago, like the apparition of Our Lady of the Pillar at Saragossa in Apostolic times; some were recent, like those of Lourdes, Fatima, and La Salette. Feasts commemorating such an appearance or a message from Our Lady are those of

Our Lady of Mount Carmel: July 16
Our Lady of Guadalupe: December 12

Our Lady of Lourdes: February 11
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal: November 27
Our Lady of the Snows: August 5.

Similar to these are the feasts which were established in gratitude for the great victories over the infidels won by the power of the Rosary:

The Feast of the Most Holy Rosary: October 7
(kept in Dominican churches on the First Sunday of October)
Our Lady of Victory: October 2
Our Lady Help of Christians: May 24.

Of the many pictures and statues around which tradition has thrown the cloak of Our Lady's blessing there are three which have been recognized, through miracles and through continued devotion, to have been specially privileged. The feasts are kept as follows:

Our Lady of Perpetual Help: June 27
Our Lady of Good Counsel: April 26
Our Lady of the Way: May 24.

The messages given to various favored children by Our Lady on these occasions have had to do with the increasing of devotion to her and to her Divine Son, by many means. When she appeared to a nobleman and his wife on an August day in the fourth century, it was to trace out in a miraculous fall of snow the outlines of a

church she wanted to be built. When she appeared on Mount Carmel, it was to give to the world the wonderful promises of the brown scapular which today is worn by so many thousands of her grateful children. To Sister Catherine Laboure she described the medal we now know as the Miraculous Medal, worn and loved by nearly every Catholic today. Saint Dominic, Saint Bernadette, and the three children of Fatima she sent to promote the Rosary, the one by preaching it, the others by establishing a place of pilgrimage and promoting a spirit of penance. A frightened Indian in the mountains of Mexico heard her tell him to go to the archbishop and have him build a church in her honor; and to show him that she meant it, she stamped her image on the rough cloth of his mantle. Hundreds of legends tell us of other commissions she gave—of how she dowered Saint Albert the Great with his science, or sat beside an artist at work, handing him the colors he should use, or sang for a devout client the melodies heard only in heaven. Not all of her visits have been official ones; mothers do not always stand on ceremony with their children.

Established for some particular religious order or diocese, and not all of universal observance, are many dearly loved feasts of the Queen of heaven. Some of these are:

Our Lady, Mother of Divine Providence: Saturday before the Third Sunday of November

Our Lady, Mother of Mercy: Saturday before the last Sunday of July

Our Lady of Suffrage: Saturday after All Saints Day

Our Lady of Consolation: Saturday after August 28

The Joys of Our Lady: Monday after Low Sunday

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Refuge of Sinners: Saturday before the Last Sunday after the Epiphany

Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces: May 31

Our Lady, Help of Those in Their Death Agony: Last Saturday in July

Our Lady, Mother of the Good Shepherd: September 3

Our Lady, Queen of All Saints and Mother of Fair Love: May 31

Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles: Saturday within the Octave of the Ascension

Our Lady, Health of the Sick; Saturday before the Last Sunday of August

Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners: August 13

Our Lady of Grace: June 9

Humility of Our Lady: May 12 or July 17

Translation of the Holy House of Loreto: December 10

Most Pure Heart of Mary: Saturday after the Octave of Corpus Christi

Purity of Our Lady: October 16

Patronage of Our Lady: a Day in October or November

Miracles of Our Lady: July 9

Our Lady of Ransom: September 24

Our Lady Queen of Peace: July 9.

Saturday has been kept as a day of special devotion to Our Lady from at least as far back as the twelfth century. Many people show their devotion on this day by attendance at Mass and Communion, by some act of self-denial in the way of food or amusements, or by saying the Litany of Loreto or some other prayers. Very often when a priest has choice of a Mass on Saturday, he says one of the several Votive Masses in honor of Our Lady. Besides the special feasts and the dedication of Saturday, two months—May and October—are designated for devotions to Mary. During these months evening devotions are held in some parishes; the Rosary is said in common; classrooms and homes show their love in an artistic way by erecting small altars of blue and white, by processions and hymns.

An ancient devotion now little employed except by religious is the recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There was a time when every devout layman (and some who did not pretend to be devout in the least) said daily the Divine Office, as a matter of course. The world moves faster now: only clerics and some few religious orders say the Divine Office. But many, both religious and a growing number of the laity, recite daily or frequently the Little Office of Our Lady. Other shorter forms of prayer—the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception is an instance—

are frequently recited either by groups or by individuals as a way of fostering and showing devotion to Mary.

Highly indulgenced and repeatedly recommended to the faithful by many illustrious popes is the devotion of the Rosary. Said privately or publicly, it is rich in spiritual rewards. The custom of saying the family Rosary, once the natural thing in a Catholic home, has unhappily declined. A revival of this devotion would do much to bring blessings on the home, on the individuals, and on the country.

One of the common means of devotion to Mary is to use her name as a part of one's own. For this reason many religious communities follow the practice of making "Mary" a part of every sister's name. There are hundreds of variations of Our Lady's name, in all languages. Some of the most common are: Marie, Marietta, Marita, Marilyn, Moira, Maura, Maureen, Miriam, Marian, Maryanna, and May, from Mary; Virginia, Dolores, Grace, Estelle, Alma, Lillian, and many others, which are adapted from Our Lady's titles.

In medieval times not only Our Lady's faithful children, but even the flowers and shrubs, were named for her. It must have been delightful to walk down a garden path and greet the flowers as "Our Lady's Thimble" or "Our Lady's Lace" or "Our Lady's Eyes," or to recall the lovely legends of why the aspen trem-

bled or where the mistletoe got its berries. Today we have ponderous Latin names for everything that grows, and people have forgotten, amid the whirl of factory wheels, that there ever was a time when the world was Our Lady's garden.

Devotion to Our Lady is the least common denominator under which all human sanctity is measured; it would be impossible to find a saint who was not devoted to her. However, some saints more than others have promoted devotion to her. Saint Bernard, whose prayer "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary . . ." has been the solace of many a dark hour, was known both during his lifetime and after his death as a tireless singer of Our Lady's praises. Saint Thomas Aquinas, great theologian and doctor of the Church, tried out his quill pens by inscribing on the borders of his manuscripts "Ave Maria," showing that she was always present in his thoughts. Bonaventure, Dominic, Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, Stanislaus Kostka, and Louis de Montfort are names that always bring to mind devotion to Mary.

Religious orders and congregations carry on a pious rivalry in doing honor to the Mother of God. Many orders were founded under her inspiration; many of them have felt tangibly her protection through the years. The Seven Holy Founders of the Servites were in her special charge; the Carmelites owed to her the design

of their habit, as did also the Dominicans; the Redemptorists treasure and promote devotion to her picture under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help; the Jesuits, in the sodality movement, bring thousands of young souls under her protection. Indeed it is reckless to begin naming even the most ancient orders which showed great devotion to her, because immediately all others would point out truthfully that every religious must be, as well as a spouse of Christ, a child of Mary.

But it is not to religious only that Mary's love was promised on that dark afternoon on Calvary. She is Mother to all of us, and to us all is given the tremendous privilege of calling on her for help in this valley of tears.

> "*Let us go with confidence to the throne of Grace: that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid . . . I have lifted up mine eyes to the mountains whence help shall come to me.*"[46]

SOURCE OF QUOTATIONS

Three books are used as sources for the quotations in these meditations. To save repetition, each is numbered and the number only is used in the following list:

I. The New Testament in English. Newly translated from the Vulgate Latin at the request of Their Lordships, the Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales; by Ronald A. Knox: Sheed and Ward, New York, 1944.

II. The Roman Missal in Latin and English. Society of Saint John the Evangelist: Desclée and Company, Paris, 1933. (Any Roman Missal, or the Dominican Missal, has almost identical wording.)

III. Dominican Sisters Office Book: The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary; John A. McHugh, O.P., and Charles J. Callan, O.P.: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., New York, 1938.

1. (II) Gradual, Mass of the Immaculate Conception. (Jud. 13, Cant. 4)
2. (I) I Corinthians 6, 19.
3. (II) From the Gradual, Mass of the Immaculate Conception. (Cant. 4)
4. (III) Third Lesson of Matins.
5. (III) Responsory, Third Lesson of Matins.
6. (II) From the Epistle for the First Sunday of Advent. (Rom. 13, 11-14)
7. (II) Introit, Second Sunday of Advent. (Is. 30)
8. (II) Gradual, Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (Cant. 6)
9. Author unknown: quoted from memory.
10. (II) From the Lesson, Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary. (Ecclus. 24, 23-31)
11. (II) From the Gospel, Feast of the Annunciation. (Luke 1, 26-38)

12. (II) From the Lesson, Feast of the Immaculate Conception. (Prov. 8, 22-35)
13. (II) From the Gospel, Feast of the Annunciation. (Luke 1, 26-38)
14. (III) First Lesson of Matins.
15. (I) St. Luke 1, 44.
16. (I) St. Luke 1, 49.
17. (I) St. Luke 1, 48.
18. (I) St. Matthew 5, 14.
19. (II) From the Introit, Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity. (Wisd. 18, 14-15)
20. (I) St. John 1, 10.
21. (I) St. John 1, 11.
22. (II) Offertory, Midnight Mass of Christmas. (Ps. 95:11, 13)
23. (II) From the Introit, First Sunday of Advent. (Ps. 24, 1-3)
24. (II) From the Gradual, Mass for the Vigil of the Nativity. (Ex. 16:6, 7)
25. (I) St. John 1, 14.
26. (II) From the Introit, Second Mass of Christmas. (Is. 9:2, 6)
27. (II) From Gradual, Feast of the Holy Family. (Ps. 26, 4)
28. (I) St. Matthew 11, 29.
29. (II) Prayer, Mass of the Second Sunday after Pentecost.
30. (II) Tract, Feast of the Seven Dolours. (Lamen 1.)
31. (II) From the Sequence, Feast of the Seven Dolours.
32. (I) St. Matthew 27, 40.
33. (III) Ps. 26, in Office of the Dead.
34. (III) Second Lesson of Matins.
35. (III) From the Lauds Hymn.
36. (II) From the Gradual, Feast of the Assumption.
37. (II) From the Introit, Feast of the Assumption.
38. (III) From Hymn of Vespers.
39. (III) Antiphon for None.
40. (III) Antiphon for Vespers, Octave of the Most Holy Rosary.
41. (II) From the Lesson, Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary. (Ecclus. 24, 23-31)

42. (II) From Tract, Feast of Our Lady Queen of the Apostles.
43. (II) Offertory, Mass of Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces.
44. (II) Tract, Votive Mass of Our Lady from the Purification to Advent.
45. (III) Versicle for Compline.
46. (II) Introit, Mass of Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces. (Hebrews 4)

SUGGESTED LIST OF BOOKS FOR A MARIAN LIBRARY*

Blunt, Hugh F. (Rev.)
Listen, Mother of God
Catholic Literary Guild
Ozone Park, 1940

Houselander, Caryll
The Reed of God
Sheed and Ward
New York and London, 1944

Jarrett, Bede (O.P.)
Our Lady of Lourdes
Salve Regina Press
Washington, D. C., 1944

Journet, Charles
Our Lady of Sorrows
Sheed, F. J., translator
Sheed and Ward
New York and London, 1938

Keyes, Frances Parkinson
The Grace of Guadalupe
Julian Messner
New York, 1941

Lasance, Francis Xavier
Our Lady Book
Benziger Brothers
New York, 1924

Martindale, C. C. (S. J.)
Our Blessed Lady: Sermons
Sheed and Ward
New York and London, 1938

O'Dwyer, David T.
Our Lady in Art
Salve Regina Press
Washington, D. C., 1934

Ryan, Finbar (O.P.)
Our Lady of Fatima
Newman Bookshop
Westminster, Md., 1944

---

* There are hundreds of excellent books about Our Lady; this list does not even skim the surface. All it proposes to do is to name the books which might serve as a beginning of a Marian library, either for a girl's private devotion or for a high-school classroom. There are many, many more. But those listed above were chosen for suitability and availability; all but one have been published in this country since 1930; all are understandable to young people; none was intended solely for theologians. A developing interest in and love for Our Lady will discover for itself new titles and new avenues of approaching her better.

Sargent, Daniel
Our Land and Our Lady
Longmans, Green and Company
New York, 1935

Schwertner, Thomas M. (O.P.)
The Rosary
Bruce Publishing Company
Milwaukee, 1934

Sister Mary Eleanore (C.S.C.)
Mary
Bruce Publishing Company
Milwaukee, 1939

Willam, Franz Michel
Mary, the Mother of Jesus
Eckhoff, Frederick, translator
B. Herder Book Company
St. Louis, 1938

2135

232.931
D694

3 5282 00542 1907

Vincentian High School Library
8200 Mc Knight Road
Pittsburgh 37, Pa.

3 5282 00542 1907